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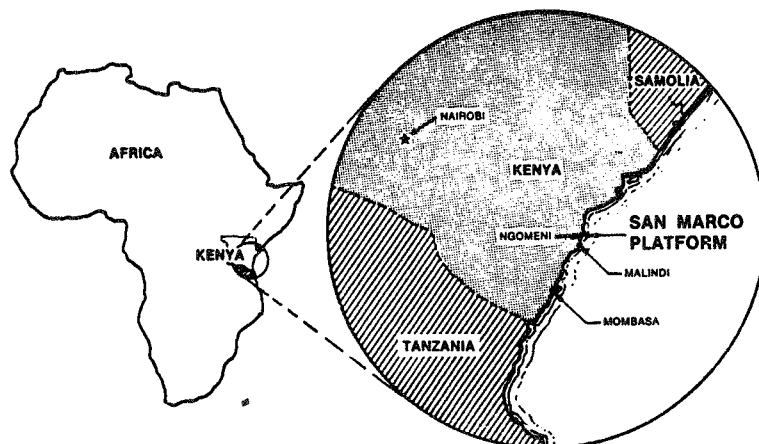
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NASA SOUNDING ROCKETS TO STUDY ECLIPSE

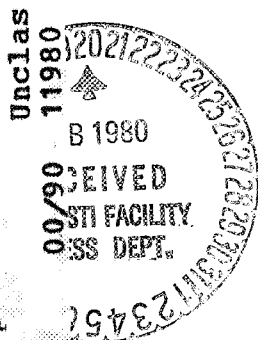
NASA will launch seven sounding rockets this week from the San Marco launch platform off Kenya, Africa, to study a total solar eclipse visible in that area.

The instrument-carrying rockets -- two Nike Black Brants, two Astrobee Ds and three Super Arcas -- will be launched Friday and Saturday, Feb. 15 and 16.

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(NASA-News-Release-80-24) NASA SOUNDING
ROCKETS TO STUDY ECLIPSE (National
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The Astrobee and Arcas rockets will carry payloads from Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa., and the Nike Black Brant payloads will be from the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in New Mexico.

An experiment of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, to measure the ultraviolet zodiacal light from the solar corona will ride "piggyback" on a Black Brant. The instrument packages will be carried to an altitude of approximately 330 kilometers (205 miles). A parachute-deployment technique is then used to make measurements as the instruments descend through the atmosphere.

Primary objective of the launches is to study changes in the electrical structure of the Earth's middle atmosphere and the temperature distribution in the solar corona during an eclipse.

The total eclipse will begin off the west coast of Africa early Friday morning and move across the continent. The launch platform will be in total eclipse at 11:30 a.m. (local time) for a period of about 10 minutes.

The eclipse will not be observable in North America.

The University of Rome's Center for Aerospace Research operates the San Marco Equatorial Mobile Range, a coastal rocket launching site in the Indian Ocean, about 4.8 km (3 mi.) off the coast of Kenya and about 8 km (5 mi.) south of the eclipse centerline.

NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md., is managing the 1980 Solar Eclipse Program for NASA's Office of Space Science. NASA's Wallops Flight Center, Wallops Island, Va., is supporting the Goddard effort. For the Penn State payloads, Wallops is supplying the rocketry and instrumentation. For the Los Alamos experiment, Goddard and Wallops are supplying the rocketry and range support. Sandia Laboratories of New Mexico is providing payload integration, launch and recovery support.

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